FOR THE NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EVALUATION OF THE NEBRASKA LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS, GRADES K–12

SEPTEMBER 2008

McREL

ABOUT MCREL

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) is a nonprofit education and research organization based in Denver, Colorado. For more than 40 years, McREL has been helping educators use research to improve student achievement. As a national leader in research, school improvement, standards-based education, balanced leadership, professional development, and scenario planning, our highly respected experts provide services to educators in 50 states and 18 foreign countries. McREL's client list includes federal, regional, and state agencies; school districts; institutions of higher education; foundations; private organizations; and international entities.

McREL operates the Central Region Educational Laboratory, providing field-based research, evaluation and policy studies, and information services to state and local education agencies in Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. McREL also houses the North Central Comprehensive Center, a U.S. Department of Education-funded program that provides research-based services to state education agencies in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota to implement the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last fifteen years, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) has provided standards review services for more than seventy school districts, a dozen state departments of education, education agencies in two U.S. territories, and the U.S. Departments of Defense and Labor. At the request of the Nebraska Department of Education, McREL conducted an analysis of the *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* for grades kindergarten through grade 12. These standards identify essential knowledge and skills for students at each grade level. The analysis required the comparison of the Nebraska standards against standards from exemplary states and a state with a strong emphasis in 21st century skills. The comparison focused upon the criteria of breadth, depth, clarity, specificity, and measurability.

OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS METHOD

States used for Comparison

The application of the criteria in the McREL study required a comparison of the Nebraska standards against a number of state standards documents. These included standards from state documents that have received high rankings from national organizations, specifically, *Education Week* and the Fordham Foundation. States receiving such recognition for standards in the English language arts include California, Indiana, Georgia, and Louisiana. McREL also compared the standards against those from West Virginia owing to that state's strong emphasis in 21st century skills, an area of increasing concern for students and educators in Nebraska. These documents provided a basis of comparison for the analysis of breadth and depth and for some aspects of the analysis of clarity and specificity.

Methods for Comparison

McREL uses a comparative analysis model to conduct standards review. Documents from selected states provide an "anchor" against which the document of interest (here, the Nebraska standards) is compared. The primary role of the content analysts is to make a fair inference as to the absence or presence of content within each document and to provide evidence for that judgment.

Analysts & Reviewers

The analysts who conducted the review have received training in content analysis. The primary analysts hold at minimum a B.A. in English and have experience teaching English at the high school level. Analysts and reviewers have reviewed standards for many state departments of education and school districts and together represent over 15 years of experience in standards analysis.

Rating Method

Each of the five areas under review—Breadth, Depth, Clarity, Specificity, and Measurability—has been accorded a score from 1 to 4 (lowest to highest) that indicates the degree of revision that, in the opinion of the reviewers, may be required to bring the standards to high quality.

THE CRITERION OF BREADTH

Breadth refers to the requirement that the Nebraska English language arts standards address all significant knowledge and skills that are considered important for students to acquire. Two questions direct the process used to evaluate the indicators on this criterion:

1. Are all significant student knowledge and skills addressed in the indicators?

2. Is there content in the indicators that is not commonly found in language arts documents?

The Nebraska standards were reviewed to determine whether they address all significant knowledge and skills in the discipline. A comparison of the standards against content described in standards documents from states used for comparison revealed that a few broad topics and numerous smaller topics were missing. Overall, however, the Nebraska standards cover the majority of knowledge and skills articulated in the comparison documents.

The standards were also reviewed to determine if they include content that is not commonly found in the same set of language arts documents described above. For the most part, all the content addressed in the indicators is important, as defined by its presence in the comparison documents. The majority of uncommon content identified in the Nebraska standards falls under the topic of media literacy and electronic communication.

Rating for Breadth: 3

The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

THE CRITERION OF DEPTH

Depth concerns whether students are appropriately challenged. Specifically, the indicators were examined to determine whether the students are held to expectations comparable by grade level to expectations held for students in comparison documents. For the analysis of depth, analysts compared the depth of the content of the Nebraska standards with that of the comparison documents. Depth refers to the cognitive complexity required to demonstrate mastery and appropriate usage of the knowledge and skills contained in a particular standard. In order to evaluate depth, McREL used Robert J. Marzano's *New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (2007).

Overall, the grade placement of content in the Nebraska standards is comparable to the state documents analyzed. Most of the indicators that could be evaluated for depth were found to be within an appropriate grade range and written at an appropriate level of difficulty in comparison to the reference documents. In some instances, the Nebraska standards require students to master knowledge or skills in earlier grades than comparison documents; in a few cases, content appeared in the comparison documents at an earlier grade. Instances of duplication and grade range placement among comparison documents made it difficult to evaluate the grade placement and cognitive challenge of some Nebraska indicators.

Rating for Depth: 3

The standard generally meets the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

THE CRITERION OF CLARITY

Clarity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska language arts standards document and the content of the standards serve to effectively communicate to the reader what it is that students should know and be able to do. The organization of the standards document was evaluated for clarity to determine whether it is easy to use and understand. The text of the standards was reviewed for clarity to determine first, whether the standards are well designed and easy to use and second, whether the language is clear in expression and free of jargon.

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* have a few issues related to clarity. The overall structure of the standards was found to effectively organize student knowledge and skills. We recommend a small amount of content be moved to a different comprehensive standard to improve the overall coherence of the document. One concept, *Word Analysis*, overlaps with other concepts and should be revised; one curricular indicator overlaps with another indicator; a few examples were identified that could be clarified through better wording; and a few indicators were of a much larger scope than other indicators within the same grade. A list of terms was identified as jargon or technical terms that should be defined within a glossary.

Rating for Clarity: 3
The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

THE CRITERION OF SPECIFICITY

Specificity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska language arts standards offer information that is specific enough to provide teaching guidance as well as to provide a meaningful distinction of content from one grade level to the next. This review included an examination for duplicate content and vague wording.

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* have significant issues related to specificity. Many indicators were found to duplicate across numerous grades. Duplication of content across grades may leave educators to wonder when a particular knowledge or skill should be mastered and assessed. Some indicators are so broadly described they may not provide clear guidance to teachers, students, and parents about the knowledge and skills that are required of students at each grade level. To avoid problems created by duplication or broadly described content, indicators should appear only in the grade in which the knowledge or skill is mastered, be used as content organizers, or be revised to provide more guidance to educators about the knowledge or skill that is expected of students at each grade level.

Rating for Specificity: 1
Significant and extensive revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section.

THE CRITERION OF MEASURABILITY

Measurability addresses the question of whether the Nebraska language arts standards identify knowledge and skills that can be assessed. Generally stated goals of the curriculum may help to introduce or frame standards, but ultimately teachers must have a clear sense of what is expected of students, and students should be capable of demonstrating this knowledge and skill.

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* have a few issues related to measurability. Numerous indicators were identified that pose problems for assessment because they may be open to interpretation. One indicator included an instructional strategy. If revised, indicators should use more explicit, concrete verbs that indicate the level of mastery required of students.

Rating for Measurability: 2
One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an evaluation of the *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* from the Nebraska Department of Education for grades K–12. The analysis focuses on five significant aspects of the standards, beginning with the *breadth* of the standards, or whether the standards represent important knowledge and skills that all students should learn. The report also provides a review of the *depth* of the standards, or whether the level of challenge represented in the expectations for students is on par with the comparison documents. The review also considers the Nebraska standards in terms of their *clarity*, or whether the content presented is well organized and clearly stated. The *specificity* of the standards was examined in terms of whether or not the standards provide adequate guidance for instruction at each grade. Finally, the review considers the Nebraska standards in terms of their *measurability*, or whether the standards identify knowledge and skills that can be assessed.

Each aspect is assigned one of four possible scores to indicate the degree to which standards meet the criterion. The rubric is expressed in terms of the degree of readiness of the standards, that is, the amount of correction necessary in order to meet the criterion.

4   The standards are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

3   The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

2   One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

1   Significant and extensive revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section.

The report on each criterion of review includes recommendations for improvement, where appropriate.

COMPARISON DOCUMENTS

The application of the criteria in the McREL study required a comparison of the Nebraska standards against a number of exemplary state standards documents. These documents include those that have received high rankings from the only two national organizations that have reviewed all state standards in the subject area: *Education Week*, with the assistance of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the Fordham Foundation. Analysts identified a handful of states rated highly by both organizations for the appropriateness of their coverage of content and depth, that is, the challenge the standards present to students. The final selection also accorded with analysts' perception of high quality standards, based on their experience reviewing and revising many state standards documents over the last decade. States receiving such recognition for standards in the English language arts include California, Indiana, Georgia, and Louisiana. McREL also compared the Nebraska standards against those from West Virginia, owing to that state's strong emphasis in 21st century skills, an area of increasing concern for students and educators in Nebraska. These documents provided a basis of comparison for the analysis of breadth and depth and for some aspects of the analysis of clarity and specificity.

The most recent standards documents published by the states were consulted and are listed below.

- *English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve* (1997) by the California State Board of Education (CA)

- *English Language Arts Standards* (2008) by the Georgia Department of Education (GA)

- *Indiana Academic Standards English/Language Arts* (2006) by the Indiana State Board of Education (IN)

- *Louisiana Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Expectations for English Language Arts* (2005) by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (LA)

- *21st Century Reading and English Language Arts Content Standards and Objectives for West Virginia Schools* (filed 2006) by the West Virginia Board of Education (WV)

A number of the states listed above have published more recent documents that are designed to support educators as they implement the standards. These supporting documents, however, are based upon the standards documents listed and are not a substitute for them, nor appropriate for comparison to a standards document.

It should be noted that state standards documents, especially those that have been highly rated, have a number of features in common; thus, it is likely that any document, such as the Nebraska standards, will be compared favorably or unfavorably according to how well it shares such features. These aspects include parsimony in the description of academic content and an indication, in the form of sample student activities, of the expectations held for students. These same documents, however, do not include extensive instructional support, address questions regarding student disposition, or provide specific curriculum guidance. Such support requires significantly more material and typically appears in supporting documents, which are published separately.

II. THE CRITERION OF BREADTH

Breadth refers to the requirement that the Nebraska Language Arts Standards address all significant knowledge and skills that are considered important for students to acquire. Two questions direct the process used to evaluate the indicators on this criterion:

1. Are all significant student knowledge and skills addressed in the indicators?

2. Is there content in the indicators that is not commonly found in language arts documents?

In order to address these two questions regarding breadth, analysts compared the Nebraska standards against five state standards documents.

CONTENT NOT ADDRESSED

In order to answer the first question on breadth—whether all significant student knowledge and skills are addressed in the Nebraska standards—analysts determined whether topics that appear in the comparison documents also appear within the Nebraska standards. Table 2.1 provides a sample of the findings on gaps in content coverage; the complete listing of the findings appears in Appendix A, Table A.1. Content listed in the table was present in at least 3 of the 5 comparison state documents but was not found in the Nebraska standards.

Comparisons were made at the topic level. For example, both the Nebraska and the state documents address the topic of speaking techniques. Although three of the states recommend specifics related to speaking techniques, such as adjusting tone, volume, and pacing while maintaining eye contact, the Nebraska standards do not. This discrepancy was not considered a gap in content coverage because the Nebraska standards do address the topic of speaking techniques more generally. This type of discrepancy is addressed in the specificity section.

TABLE 2.1. EXAMPLES OF CONTENT NOT PRESENT IN NEBRASKA STANDARDS BUT PRESENT IN THREE OR MORE OF FIVE COMPARISON DOCUMENTS

Content	Comparison Documents
Reading	
Examine the social, historical, and cultural influences on literary texts and characters.	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Evaluate the meaning of archetypal patterns and symbols.	CA, GA, IN
Writing	
Develop major and minor characters through dialogue.	CA, GA, IN, LA
Write narratives that establish plot, setting, and point of view.	CA, GA, IN
Speaking / Listening	
Use notes or memory aids to structure and assist in presentation delivery.	CA, GA, IN

These examples and the balance of the findings presented in Appendix A, Table A.1 show content that is commonly found in the comparison documents but not found in the Nebraska standards. The

content statement for each row synthesizes the language and details of documents cited in that row. The degree of support for the content may be gauged by reviewing the states cited for each piece of content. Overall, the analysis found a few general topics, such as analysis and evaluation of literature and general writing techniques, missing from the Nebraska standards. Numerous smaller topics, such as the use of memory aids to assist during the delivery of a presentation, were also absent.

CONTENT NOT COMMONLY FOUND

It has been observed that all of the knowledge and skills identified as important by national organizations in the subject areas cannot be addressed in the classroom given the time available in the school day. A related concern is addressed in a report of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a large-scale, cross-national comparative study of math and science curricula. In addressing the relatively poor performance of U.S. students, the report's authors note that our "preoccupation with breadth rather than depth, with quantity rather than quality, probably affects how well U.S. students perform in relation to their counterparts in other countries" (Schmidt, McKnight, & Raizen, 1997). Researchers Marzano & Kendall (1999) show that at least by one measure, attempting to address all the content identified in standards documents would mean that "schooling would have to be extended from kindergarten to grade 21" (p. 104).

Thus, it is critical that the process of evaluating the standards for the breadth of content include a means for identifying content that might not be considered essential. In order to provide this information, analysts identified, in the course of their comparison of the content against other standards documents, that content present in Nebraska which is present in only two or fewer state standards documents.

Table 2.2 provides select examples of the findings from this analysis; Appendix A, Table A.2 contains the full results. These tables identify content for possible deletion from the Nebraska standards, based on its absence in comparison documents. Analysis was done at the topic level. (For a description of this process, see the discussion preceding Table 2.1.)

TABLE 2.2. EXAMPLES OF CONTENT PRESENT IN NEBRASKA STANDARDS BUT FOUND IN TWO OR FEWER OF FIVE COMPARISON DOCUMENTS

Curricular Indicator	Students:
LA 12.1.3.b	Use word structure, word origins, and derivations to read, write, and spell (e.g., . . . interpret meaning of symbols . . .)
LA 0.4.1.d	Engage in activities with learners from a variety of cultures through electronic means (e.g., podcasts, video chats, distance learning)
LA 1–12.4.1.d	Engage in activities with learners from a variety of cultures through electronic means (e.g., podcasts, video chats, distance learning, e-pals)
LA 3.4.1.c	Practice safe and ethical behaviors when communicating and interacting with others (e.g., safe information to share online, appropriate language use, utilizing appropriate sites and materials)
LA 4–12.4.1.c	Practice safe and ethical behaviors when communicating and interacting with others (e.g., safe information to share online, appropriate language use, utilizing appropriate sites and materials, respecting diverse perspectives)

Overall, the majority of content identified as not commonly found in comparison documents is related to safety and ethical behaviors in the use of electronic communication and networks. In addition, the Nebraska standards and indicators contain more content related to media literacy than do the comparison documents. However, given the increasing concern of Nebraska educators to include 21st century skills, some of this content may be retained as desirable.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Nebraska standards were reviewed to determine whether they address all significant knowledge and skills in the discipline. A comparison of the standards against content described in standards documents from states used for comparison revealed that a few broad topics and numerous smaller topics were missing. Overall, however, the Nebraska standards cover the majority of knowledge and skills articulated in the comparison documents. The standards were also reviewed to determine if they include content that is not commonly found in the same set of language arts documents described above.

For the most part, all the content addressed in the indicators is important, as defined by its presence in the comparison documents. The majority of uncommon content identified in the Nebraska standards falls under the topic of media literacy and electronic communication.

Rating for Breadth: 3

The standard generally meets the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

III. THE CRITERION OF DEPTH

Depth concerns whether students are appropriately challenged. Specifically, the Nebraska standards were examined to determine whether the students are held to expectations comparable by grade level to expectations held for students in comparison documents. For the analysis of depth, analysts compared the depth of the content of the Nebraska standards with that of the comparison state standards. Depth refers to the cognitive complexity required to demonstrate mastery and appropriate usage of the knowledge and skills contained in a particular standard. In order to evaluate depth, McREL used Robert J. Marzano's *New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (2007).

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF MARZANO'S TAXONOMY

Marzano's Taxonomy was chosen for this evaluation because it is consistent with recent research in cognitive science about the relative difficulty of mental tasks. Marzano notes that, with the complexity of a mental process or skill—such as using adjectives correctly in written composition—the more familiar one is with a process, the more quickly one executes it and the easier it becomes. Thus, mental processes and skills should not be ordered hierarchically in terms of their complexity. They can, however, be ordered in terms of levels of control; that is, some mental processes exercise control over other processes.

Processes can also be ordered in terms of the conscious awareness that is required to execute them. For example, the lowest level, the retrieval process, can be monitored for accuracy by the higher mental process of metacognition. For example, a student might use metacognitive skills to assess why he or she continues to make the same mistake in his or her writing. In this taxonomic organization, the process of comprehension requires slightly more conscious thought than the process of retrieval, and the process of analysis, and of utilization, even more conscious thought. Thus, the hierarchically ordered levels of difficulty, which do not depend upon the complexity of a task for their ordering, provide a useful means for analyzing and describing levels of student performance.

Particularly useful in the taxonomy is the distinction maintained between declarative and procedural knowledge. Levels of difficulty are described not only in their relationship to each other, but also with respect to how they relate differently to information (declarative knowledge) and skill (procedural knowledge).

Marzano's Taxonomy consists of six levels:

1. Retrieval
2. Comprehension
3. Analysis
4. Knowledge Utilization
5. Metacognition
6. Self-system thinking

Exhibit 3.1 provides a summary of the first five cognitive levels in Marzano's taxonomy.

EXHIBIT 3.1. SUMMARY: CATEGORIES IN THE NEW TAXONOMY

Level 1: Retrieval

Recognizing: The standard requires the student to identify features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components.

Recalling: The standard requires the student to provide features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components.

Executing: The standard requires the student to perform a procedure without significant error, but does not necessarily require that the student understand how and why the procedure works.

Level 2: Comprehension

Integrating: The standard requires the student to identify the basic structure of knowledge and the critical as opposed to non-critical characteristics of that structure.

Symbolizing: The standard requires the student to identify or recognize features of information, but does not necessarily require the student to understand the structure of knowledge or require that the student be able to differentiate critical from non-critical components.

Level 3: Analysis

Matching: The standard requires the student to identify important similarities and differences between knowledge.

Classifying: The standard requires the student to identify superordinate and subordinate categories related to knowledge.

Analyzing Errors: The standard requires the student to identify errors in the presentation or use of knowledge.

Generalizing: The standard requires the student to construct new generalizations or principles based on knowledge.

Specifying: The standard requires the student to identify specific applications or logical consequences of knowledge.

Level 4: Knowledge Utilization

Decision Making: The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to make decisions or expects the student to be able to make decisions about the use of the knowledge.

Problem Solving: The standard expects the student to use the knowledge to solve problems or to solve problems about the knowledge.

Experimenting: The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to generate and test hypotheses or to generate and test hypotheses about the knowledge.

Investigating: The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to conduct investigations or to conduct investigations about the knowledge.

Level 5: Metacognition

Specifying Goals: The standard requires the student to set a plan for goals relative to the knowledge.

Process Monitoring: The standard requires the student to monitor the execution of the knowledge.

Monitoring Clarity: The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she has clarity about the knowledge.

Monitoring Accuracy: The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she is accurate about the knowledge.

Adapted from: Marzano, Robert (2007) *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*

Exhibit 3.1 displays only the first five levels of Marzano's taxonomy because they are useful for rating standards and assessments, while the sixth is more appropriate for classroom-based observations. Broadly speaking, the hierarchy is based on the idea that each level requires more sophisticated processing in short-term memory before information is moved to long-term memory. This empirically derived framework is based on brain research and cognitive and information processing sciences. (For an expanded table of the Marzano's Taxonomy, see Appendix B, Table B.1.)

In addition to requiring more or less cognitively complex demonstrations from students, standards may also differ by the grade at which these demonstrations are expected. Thus, it is critical to determine not only what is expected of students but also when it is expected. For example, if at 3rd grade Nebraska students are required to count syllables in words, it may be that exemplary state standards expect the same level of difficulty, but do so at 1st grade. This has clear implications for relative degree of cognitive challenge.

COMPARISON AGAINST STATE STANDARDS

In order to evaluate the relative depth or challenge presented by standards, analysts compared topics addressed in the Nebraska standards against comparable topics within comparison state standards documents (specifically, state standards from California, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, and West Virginia).

Analysts reviewed the content for relative grade placement, identifying content that appears at an *earlier* grade than is commonly found in the comparison standards documents or a *later* grade than is commonly found in standards documents. For grades K–2, if Nebraska grade placement of content differed by *one* grade or more from three or more comparison documents, the content was analyzed for cognitive demand. This approach ensured that unless the Nebraska grade assignment reflected a judgment of the majority of documents, the associated content was subject to further analysis. For grades 3–8, when Nebraska grade placement of content differed by two grades or more from three or more comparison documents, such content was likewise addressed in the depth analysis table. The two-grade discrepancy permitted at grades 3–8 before further analysis was required reflects the wider and more frequent variation among states in their assignment of grades to the same or similar academic content. When the Nebraska content from the grade band 9–12 commonly appeared in an *earlier* grade band in comparison standards documents, it was addressed in the depth analysis table.

Noteworthy differences between the comparison state documents and the Nebraska standards are summarized by topic in Appendix B, Table B.2. The following table (Table 3.2) shows select examples of the result of the analysis. Each Nebraska language arts indicator related to a topic that surfaced during the depth analysis appears in the leftmost column. The cognitive demand, as identified using the Marzano Taxonomy for the Nebraska content, appears in the central column. The column on the far right provides a brief summary of the disparity in grades and taxonomic level, where appropriate.

Overall, the Nebraska standards contain a few indicators that disagree with comparison states concerning grade placement of content. In the majority of cases, the Nebraska content was more rigorous than the comparison states, meaning similar content appeared in an earlier grade than in the state documents. In a couple of cases, state documents placed content at an earlier grade than the Nebraska standards. Some discrepancies in cognitive difficulty also were found.

TABLE 3.2. EXAMPLE OF DEPTH ANALYSIS

Nebraska Indicator	Cognitive Demand	Relative Grade Placement of Content
Blending/Segmenting		
Kindergarten LA 0.1.2.c Blend and segment syllable sounds into spoken words.	Execution is at the **Retrieval level** (1) of Marzano's axonomy.	Content first appears in grade 1 in four states (CA, GA, IN, WV) at the same taxonomic level.
Point of View		
Grades 6-8 LA 6-8.1.6.b Identify and analyze elements of narrative text (e.g., . . . point of view).	Identification is at the **Retrieval level (1)** and analysis is at the **Analysis level (3)** of Marzano's taxonomy.	Content first appears in grade 1 in one state (LA), in grade 3 in one state (CA), and in grade 4 in another state (GA) all at the **Retrieval level (1)** of Marzano's taxonomy.

Some topics in comparison documents and the Nebraska standards are commonly addressed at several grade levels. Typically, the content at each grade in such cases is made distinct by the examples provided or the cognitive demand required. In Table 3.2, for example, the analysis of point of view appears in grades 6–8; other aspects of narrative text may appear in other grades in the standards documents. Only Nebraska content that appears in an *earlier* grade than is commonly found in the comparison standards documents or in a *later* grade than is commonly found is listed along with the pertinent information from comparison documents.

It is important to note that standards cannot be evaluated on the criterion of depth when they either lack specificity—so that it is unclear what content is intended for which grade—or when content related to a particular topic or skill is duplicated without indication as to when students should master the identified knowledge or skill, and that ambiguity of grade placement inhibits the analysis against comparison documents. For example, if content was found in the Nebraska standards at both kindergarten and grade 1, and comparison documents all placed the content at grade 1, this content could not be evaluated for depth because the grade in which Nebraska students would master the skill was unclear. Such ambiguity can only be resolved, and depth made clear, when the indicators are made more grade-specific, or placed only at the level of mastery. Thus, very little of the content identified as problematic in the next sections, Clarity, Specificity, and Measurability, could be evaluated for depth.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, the grade placement of content in the Nebraska standards is comparable to the state documents analyzed. Most of the indicators that could be evaluated for depth were found to be within an appropriate grade range and written at an appropriate level of difficulty in comparison to the reference documents. In some instances, the Nebraska standards require students to master knowledge or skills in earlier grades than comparison documents; in a few cases, content appeared in the comparison documents at an earlier grade. Instances of duplication and grade range placement

among comparison documents made it difficult to evaluate the grade placement and cognitive challenge of some Nebraska indicators.

Rating for Depth: 3

The standard generally meets the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

IV. THE CRITERION OF CLARITY

Clarity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska language arts standards document and the content of the standards serve to effectively communicate what students should know and be able to do. The organization of the standards document was evaluated for clarity to determine whether it is easy to use and understand. The text of the standards was reviewed to determine whether the standards are well designed and easy to use and second, and whether the language is clear in expression and free of jargon.

COHERENT ORGANIZATION

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* organize student learning through comprehensive standards, concepts, grade-level standards, and curricular indicators.

Comprehensive Standards

The content in the *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* is organized at the highest level by large ideas or topics called comprehensive standards. These standards are broad statements of student knowledge and skill related to reading, writing, speaking and listening, and multiple literacies. The categories created by the comprehensive standards are commonly used to organize language arts standards and do so successfully.

In a few cases, however, content organized beneath the reading standard may be better organized under the writing standard. In all cases, these are grade-level standards and indicators under the comprehensive reading standard that reference writing and spelling. Please note the following grade-level standards for the concept W*ord Analysis*:

> *Kindergarten: Students will acquire phonetic knowledge as they learn to read, write, and spell.*
>
> *Grades 1–2: Students will use phonetic analysis to read, write, and spell.*
>
> *Grades 3–7: Students will use knowledge of phonetic and structural analysis to read, write, and spell.*
>
> *Grades 8–12: Students will use structural analysis to read, write, and spell.*

Some of the content organized beneath the grade-level standards shown above is appropriate for the comprehensive reading standard and should remain, but the content that applies to writing and spelling may be better organized beneath the writing standard. For example, the following indicators are organized under the grade-level standards shown above for kindergarten and grade 1:

> *LA 0.1.3.c: Use phonetic knowledge to write (e.g., approximated spelling)*
>
> *LA 1.1.3.c: Spell single syllable phonetically regular words*

The grade-level standard under which these indicators are organized should be revised to exclude writing content and those indicators that pertain to writing, such as those listed above, should be moved to the comprehensive writing standard. This content could easily be accommodated under grade-level standards for the writing process. In other cases, content would need to be divided in order to move the writing content and retain the reading content in the reading standard. Note the following example:

> *LA 1.1.3.b: Read, write, and spell sight words*

In this example, the skill of reading sight words should remain in the comprehensive reading standard, but content related to writing and spelling sight words should be moved to the comprehensive writing standard. Comparison documents typically describe such content separately. Also, such content often appears at slightly different grade levels in comparison documents, with writing skills appearing shortly after related reading skills are mastered. Ultimately, moving all content that pertains to writing to the writing standard will both aid users of the documents in finding particular content and improve the overall coherence of the document's organizational structure.

Concepts

Under each comprehensive standard, there is a level of organization called concepts. There are several concepts under each comprehensive standard. Concepts are words or phrases that serve to group the grade-level standards by related topics. The majority of these concepts are present in every grade, but a few concepts, such as *Knowledge of Print* and *Phonological Awareness*, are present only in early elementary grades.

Overall, the concepts in the language arts standards create a coherent organizational layer that help orient the reader to the structure of the grade-level standards and preview the breadth of content within a comprehensive standard. However, in one case a concept does not clearly indicate the content within that concept. The concept *Word Analysis* includes much content that is commonly found under the category of vocabulary in comparison documents. Thus, the distinction between the *Word Analysis* concept and the *Vocabulary* concept in the Nebraska standards is not always clear. For example, the following indicators both appear in grade 4 under different concepts:

Concept: Word Analysis

- *LA 4.1.3.b: Use word structure to read text*
- *Prefixes/suffixes*
- *Compound words*
- *Contractions*
- *Syllabication*
- *Derivation*

Concept: Vocabulary

LA 4.1.5.a: Use word structure elements, known words, and word patterns to determine meaning (e.g., parts of speech, plurals, possessives, suffixes, prefixes, base and root words)

Although these indicators appear under different concepts, the distinction between them is not obvious. We recommend that the majority of content under the *Word Analysis* concept be combined with the *Vocabulary* concept to eliminate overlapping ideas. Note, however, that there is some content organized under the *Word Analysis* concept, particularly within the early grades, that is distinct from vocabulary. This content describes decoding skills and the alphabetic principle, such as the following:

LA 1.1.3.d & LA 2.1.3.c: Blend sounds to form words

Decoding is the process of using letter-sound correspondences to recognize words. Content within the *Word Analysis* concept that is related to decoding could become its own concept. Such a concept, similar to *Knowledge of Print* and *Phonological Awareness*, would likely only have content in the early grades.

One other topic organized under the concept *Word Analysis* appears to overlap with content found within the *Fluency* concept. The following indicators appear under the *Word Analysis* concept within kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2:

> *LA 0.1.3.d: Recognize known words in connected text (e.g., big book, environmental print, class list, labels)*
>
> *LA 1-2.1.3.b: Read, write, and spell sight words*

The underlying skill in these indicators seems to overlap with the skills described in the following indicators, which are organized within the Fluency concept within kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2:

> *LA 0.1.4.b: Recognize some high frequency words and phrases*
>
> *LA 1.1.4.b: Recognize a core of high-frequency words and phrases*
>
> *LA 2.1.4.b: Read high-frequency words and phrases automatically*

When similar content is located in more than one place within the standards document, it is problematic in that readers may not readily locate all content related to that topic. Furthermore, the overall size of the standards document grows unnecessarily.

Problems with overlap were identified in one other instance. Note the indicator shown below, which is located within the *Comprehension* concept:

> *LA 5.1.6.d: Identify literary devices and explore the ways in which language is used (e.g., simile, metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, imagery, rhythm)*

This indicator is closely related to an indicator under the *Vocabulary* concept:

> *LA 5.1.5.d: Understand semantic relationships (e.g., multiple meanings, metaphors, similes, idioms, analogies)*

Although "literary devices" is a broader category than words that have "semantic relationships," the two ideas overlap, as the examples clearly show. The indicators shown above appear within numerous grades, but with slight differences in their wording.

To avoid overlapping content, duplicate content could be placed under the concept with which it has the strongest relationship. In the case of literary devices and semantic relationships, examples that are duplicated could be placed solely under the *Comprehension* concept, since literary devices may include content that is more about understanding and processing the quality of a text, rather than building vocabulary skills. Eliminating overlap, when possible, will help eliminate duplication.

Grade-Level Standards

Under each concept, there are statements of student knowledge and skill for each grade called grade-level standards. These standards serve to further define the comprehensive standard in relation to each concept for each grade. Grade-level standards are sometimes duplicated for more than one grade but often change in order to differentiate student knowledge and skill for various grades. Just as not all concepts are found in every grade, grade-level standards are provided only for those grades in which the concept is present. As an organizing layer, the grade-level standards along with their associated concepts effectively organize the content beneath them.

Curricular Indicators

The smallest level of organization in the *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* is the curricular indicator. Overall, the indicators were found to clearly articulate expected student knowledge and skill; however, there were a few identified problems with overlapping content, inconsistent format, confusing examples, and inconsistent scope.

Overlapping Indicators

Content within the indicators was found to overlap in one case. The overlapping indicators appear under the same grade-level standard within the same grade, under the *Phonological Awareness* grade-level standard in grade 1:

> *LA 1.1.2.e: Match, discriminate, blend, segment, delete, and manipulate phonemes orally*

> *LA 1.1.2.f: Delete and manipulate phonemes to create new words, pseudo or real (e.g., "What is hand without the /h/?" –and; "The word is cat. Change the /t/ to /n/. What's the new word?" –can)*

In this case, the skill of manipulating phonemes appears in both indicators. However, the first indicator is less specific and includes additional skills not present in the second. To eliminate overlap, these indicators could be combined and the second indicator could be used as an example for the combined statement.

Inconsistent Format

In a couple of cases, the *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* document is inconsistent in the format used to relay information. These inconsistencies, although not much more than typographical errors and not critical to understanding the meaning of the document, are anomalies and may impact the overall quality of the Nebraska standards.

For example, the following indicator does not begin with a verb, as do all other indicators, and is not a complete sentence:

> *LA 0.1.1.f: Knowledge that print reads from left to right and top to bottom*

In the indicator above, the word "knowledge" should be revised to "know." In the other case of inconsistent format, a conjunction is missing before the last item in a list:

> *LA 6–8.1.6.d: Use preface, epilogue, author's notes to enhance comprehension in narrative text*

Inserting the word "and" before "author's notes" will improve the clarity of this indicator.

Confusing Examples

In a few cases, the examples used to help clarify the scope and meaning of the indicators are not clear. Please note the following indicators:

> *LA 0.2.2.a: Write for a specific purpose (e.g., lists, alphabet book, story with picture, in pretend/free play, label objects in classroom)*

> *LA 1.2.2.a: Write for a specific purpose (e.g., story with pictures, factual book, alphabet book, poem, letter)*

> *LA 2.2.2.a: Write for a specific purpose (e.g., story with pictures, factual book, alphabet book, poem, letter)*

The stems of these indicators are about purposes for writing, but the examples are not examples of the various purposes for writing. Rather, they are particular forms of writing. To clarify the meaning of the indicator, the examples should be changed to describe purposes for writing, or the stems might be expanded to include "forms." For example, the indicator for kindergarten could be revised to read, "Write for a specific purpose (e.g., to tell a story, to pretend or free play, to share information, to identify objects in the classroom) in a variety of forms (e.g., lists, alphabet book, picture book, labels)." In a similar case, the examples in the following indicator are not all parallel to each other and do not clearly align to the emphasis of the indicator's stem:

> *LA 6–12.4.1.e: While reading, listening, and viewing, evaluate the message for bias, commercialism and hidden agendas (e.g., product placement, television ad, radio ad, movie, body image, sexism)*

The focus of the benchmark is assessing bias, commercialism, and hidden agendas. Some of the examples, such as *product placement, body image,* and *sexism,* are examples of possible bias, commercialism, and hidden agendas; other examples, such as *television ad, radio ad,* and *movie,* are examples of the mediums that might be evaluated. To clarify this indicator, the examples of mediums should be eliminated. Alternatively, the indicator may be rewritten to separate the mediums students study from the aspects of media that they are evaluating: "While reading, listening, and viewing a variety of media (e.g., television ad, radio ad, movie), evaluate the message for bias, commercialism, and hidden agendas (e.g., product placement, body image, sexism)."

In another case, it is unclear how some of the provided examples align to the meaning of the indicator:

> *LA 0.4.1.e: Gather and share information and opinions as a result of communication with others (e.g., computer applications, teacher controlled internet downloads, multimedia presentations)*

It is not clear in the indicator above how "computer applications" and "teacher controlled internet downloads" will allow communication with others. While these technologies may support the gathering of information, they do not necessarily facilitate inter-personal communication. Although the stem of this indicator is used in other grades, the examples in those cases clearly support communication with others.

In another instance, the examples used in a series of indicators do not seem to align to the stem. Please note the following indicators:

> *LA 0.1.5.c: Develop awareness of context clues (e.g., predictions, word and sentence clues) and text features (e.g., titles, bold print, illustrations) that may be used to infer the meaning of unknown words*

> *LA 1.1.5.c: Recognize that context clues (e.g., word and sentence clues, re-reading) and text features (e.g., photos, illustrations, titles, bold print) exist and may be used to help infer the meaning of unknown words*

> *LA 2.1.5.c: Recognize and use context clues (e.g., word and sentence clues, re-reading) and text features (e.g., illustrations, graphs, titles, bold print) to help infer unknown word meanings*

> *LA 3.1.5.c: Use context clues (e.g., word, phrase, and sentence clues, re-reading) and text features (e.g., table of contents, maps, charts, font/format styles) to help infer unknown word meanings*

LA 4–7.1.5.c: Use context clues (e.g., word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph clues, re-reading) and text features (e.g., glossary, headings, subheadings. captions) to infer unknown word meanings

The phrase "context clues" is commonly used to describe clues about word meaning that may be inferred through the use of definition, example, restatement, or contrast within a sentence or paragraph's content. It is unclear how "predictions" and "re-reading" used as examples in the indicators above are examples of context clues. To improve the clarity of these indicators, the phrase "context clues" may be changed to "comprehension strategies" in order to accurately describe all of the clarifying examples provided.

Inconsistent Scope

Indicators should also be of a consistent or similar size so that readers can anticipate how large or small a scope of content will be addressed in any one statement. When the level of specificity is inconsistent, the purpose of the standards becomes unclear. If one statement describes knowledge and skill that would take a student weeks to master and another statement just minutes, the document becomes less useful for planning a unit or lesson. In a few cases, indicators were very broad, encompassing much more content than other indicators at the same grade levels:

LA 0.1.6.l, LA 1-5.1.6.n, LA 6-8.1.6.o, LA 12.6.n: Respond to text verbally, in writing, or artistically

Above, the indicator broadly describes the modes for responding to texts, but other indicators related to this topic provide greater detail about the types and qualities of responses required of students, such as answering comprehension questions or participating in group discussions. Two indicators of similarly large scope appear within the *Comprehension* concept:

LA 12.1.6.c: Summarize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate narrative text

LA 12.1.6.e: Summarize, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate informational text

These two indicators broadly describe the cognitive level that students' responses to texts should meet; however, this information is already embedded within more specific indicators that detail student skills and the characteristics of texts to which students should apply these skills. For example, the following indicators detail the skills of summarizing, analyzing, and evaluating narrative texts:

LA 6–8.1.6.c Summarize narrative text using understanding of characters, setting, sequence of events, plot, and theme

LA 12.1.6.d Analyze and critique the effects of the author's style and complex literary devices (e.g., allusion, symbolism, irony, foreshadowing, flashback, metaphor, personification, epiphany, oxymoron, dialect, tone, mood)

These indicators provide greater specificity regarding the skills broadly described in LA 12.1.6.c. To improve the consistency of scope in each indicator and prevent overlapping content, broadly described indicators such as LA 12.1.6.c and LA 12.1.6.e may be more usefully employed as content organizers, such as grade-level standards.

Finally, one indicator seems to broadly describe the topic of reading fluency:

LA 1.1.3.e & LA 2.1.3.d: Read words in connected text

This indicator is very large in scope. Other indicators are described much more specifically, detailing the genres that students in these grades should read and the qualities of their reading abilities. Thus,

the essential content of this indicator is covered through other statements, and this indicator could be deleted without consequence.

JARGON AND TECHNICAL TERMS

The language used in standards documents should be clear and free of jargon and technical terms; if the use of technical terms is unavoidable, a glossary should be provided. Sometimes, technical terminology within standards helps to explicate accurately and precisely what students should know and be able to do. In such cases, terms should be explained clearly and as if for members of the general public. Examples of words or phrases that could be defined in a glossary of terms are included in Table 4.1 on the following page.

TABLE 4.1. TECHNICAL TERMS FOR INCLUSION IN A GLOSSARY

abbreviation	guiding question	preface
acronym	hidden agenda	prefix
affix	high frequency word	pretend/free play
alliteration	homograph	product placement
allusion	homophone	proposition/support pattern
analogy	hyperbole	prosodic reading
annotation	idiom	reader's theater
antonym	imagery	reciprocal communication
assumption	inference	recurring theme
base word	inferential question	repeating line
bias	inferred theme	rhythm
biography	inflected ending	rime
blend/blending [syllables]	inquiry tool	root word
blog	internal conflict	segmenting [sentences, syllables]
brainstorm	interpretive question	self-correct
characterization	intonation	self-monitor
choral reading	irony	semantic relationships
citation	literal question	sidebar
clause	literary device	sight word
commercialism	mapping [prewriting tool]	simile
compound word	medium	simple compound
conflict	memoir	social bookmarking
connotation	metaphor	stereotype
context clue	modality	storyboarding
contraction	mood [in writing]	stress [while reading]
derivation	multiple meaning word	structural analysis
dialect	non-verbal cue	writing style
digital idea mapping tool	onomatopoeia	suffix
discriminate [phonemes]	onset	syllabication
distance learning	oxymoron	syllable
environmental print	pace	symbol
e-pal	part of speech	symbolism
epilogue	periodical	synonym
epiphany	personification	tone
external conflict	phoneme	video chat
figurative language	phonetic knowledge	voice [in writing]
flashback	phonetically regular [word]	vowel variance
fluency	phonological awareness	word family
foreshadowing	phrasing [while reading]	word origin
free write	plural	word pattern
genre	podcast	word web
gloss	point of view	writing conventions
graphic organizer	possessive	writing process

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* have a few issues related to clarity. The overall structure of the standards effectively organizes student knowledge and skills, yet we recommend a small amount of content be moved to a different comprehensive standard to improve the overall coherence of the document. One concept, *Word Analysis*, overlaps with other concepts and should be revised; one curricular indicator overlaps with another indicator; a few examples were identified that could be clarified through better wording; and a few indicators were found to be of a much larger scope than other indicators within the same grade. Technical terms should be defined within a glossary.

Rating for Clarity: 3
The standard generally meets the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

V. THE CRITERION OF SPECIFICITY

Specificity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska Language Arts Standards effectively communicate to the reader the level of detail necessary to understand what students should know and be able to do. Standards were reviewed to determine whether content is described at an adequate level of specificity so that teachers at each grade know what students should learn. A lack of specificity undermines one of the central purposes of standards: to make clear to students and teachers what is expected and to inform everyone in the system of those expectations.

DUPLICATION

Lack of specificity undermines one of the central purposes of standards: to make clear to students and teachers what is expected and to inform everyone in the system of those expectations. Given the level of specific information available for describing student knowledge and skills in comparison documents, analysts determined whether the standards document is specific enough to provide teaching guidance and to discriminate content from one grade level to the next. The primary problem of specificity that arises in the Nebraska standards is the presence of identical grade-level indicators over the span of several grades. The majority of indicators are duplicated in more than one grade, so we do not list every instance of duplication in this report. The following indicators, for example, appear verbatim across numerous grades:

> LA 0–4.1.6.b: Identify elements of narrative text (e.g., characters, setting, plot) (grades K–4)

> LA 3–12.3.3.c: Interact and collaborate with others in learning situations by contributing questions, information, opinions, and ideas using a variety of media and formats (grades 3–12)

> LA 6–8.2.2.c: Write in a variety of genres, considering medium and available technology (grades 6–8)

The duplication of indicators across grade levels without any indication of when the knowledge or skill should be mastered creates two problems: first, the teacher at the given grade level does not know what exactly is expected of students, and, second, teachers in the grade levels before and after the given level cannot know what will be or has been addressed and so cannot plan accordingly.

Although content must be identified grade-by-grade for determining instruction, the process of language arts education is a continuum where students build reading, writing, and oral communication skills over many years. This difficulty results in many language arts documents struggling to recognize the continuum of learning while clearly defining the changing expectations of students from grade to grade.

Because grade-by-grade standards documents must capture the increasing level of difficulty as well as provide a clear focus for assessment, indicators that appear virtually unchanged at two or more grade levels do not provide meaningful grade-level instruction or assessment information for teachers. It is unclear as to whether the grade an indicator first appears is the grade intended for introduction of the concept or skill, or for mastery, and the following grade intended for review. Content that is duplicated also increases the overall number of indicators, which makes the standards document unfocused and cumbersome.

GRADE DISTINCTION

Ideally, indicators should only appear in the grade at which the knowledge or skill should be mastered. Teachers can determine that a student is performing at a higher or lower grade-level in relation to a specific knowledge or skill by noting how that knowledge or skill is described at those grade levels. Where there is no definable difference, the knowledge or skill may be better used as a content organizer, such as a grade-level standard.

Alternatively, some indicators can be clarified by appending the phrase "grade-appropriate" when it can be used meaningfully. For example, indicator *LA 3–5.1.4.b Read words and phrases accurately and automatically* is duplicated in grades 3, 4, and 5. The element of this indicator that will increase in difficulty from grade to grade is the complexity of the words and phrases that students read. As the texts that students read become more complex, the skill of reading fluently also becomes more difficult. Thus, a revision of the indicator to "*Read **grade-appropriate** words and phrases accurately and automatically*" indicates to what element of the indicator should increase in difficulty, and thus helps differentiate the knowledge and skill for multiple grade levels.

In other cases, indicators that are duplicated across grade levels could be differentiated at each grade by either rewording the indicator in a more specific way or using examples to specify grade-by-grade expectations. Below, are examples of language arts indicators that are described in a general way and do not specifically describe the knowledge or skills students are expected to learn.

> *LA 6–8.1.6.1 & LA 12.1.6.k: Build and activate prior knowledge in order to make text to self, text to text, and text to world connections (grades 6–12)*
>
> *LA 4–12.3.1.c: Utilize available media to enhance communication (grades 4–12)*

These indicators are described so broadly that teachers may not be consistent in how they teach and assess them. In addition, they may not know what content their colleagues address before and after their grade level. Table 5.1 shows an example of content in the Nebraska standards that is duplicated across multiple grades but is described in comparison documents in a more detailed manner, which allows for greater grade-level specificity.

Table 5.1. Recommendations for Better Grade Specificity

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
Handwriting and Formatting	
Grades 1–2	Grade K
LA 1.2.1.g & LA 2.2.1.f: Publish a legible document handwritten)	Print all uppercase and lowercase letters, attending to the form of the letters [CA, IN, LA, WV]
Grades 3–12	Grade 1
LA 3–12.2.1.f: Publish a legible document (e.g., handwritten or electronic)	Write with appropriate spaces between letters, words, and sentences [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Grade 2
	Print legibly (e.g., letter formation, letter size, spacing, alignment) [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Grade 3
	Write legibly in cursive [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 4
	Indent the beginning of paragraphs [CA, GA, IN LA, WV]
	Grade 8
	Use formatting techniques (e.g., headings, differing fonts, page orientation) to aid comprehension [CA, IN]
	Grades 9–12
	Follow style conventions and manuscript requirements for specific types of documents [CA, GA, WV]
	Use page formats, fonts, spacing, highlighting, and images that contribute to the readability and impact of the document [CA, GA]

In the example shown above, the Nebraska content in the left hand column contains indicators related to the use of handwriting and formatting writing that are duplicated across numerous grades. Comparison documents articulate a greater level of detail by describing specific writing skills that students should master at each grade level; the degree of support for the suggested comparison document content can be gauged by reviewing the state citations following each recommended statement of knowledge and skill in the right hand column. Please note that comparison states do not have specific content related to the topic of handwriting and formatting for grades 5–7. The lack of content at these grades indicates that there is no new level of mastery concerning this skill until later grades. Students should be expected to maintain the skills mastered at previous grades and work towards those skills that should be mastered in later grades. Furthermore, use of a grade range in the "suggested content" column indicates that there was a lack of consensus among comparison states about the grade in which a particular skill should be mastered.

Nebraska content that is described in greater detail in the comparison documents appears in Appendix C, Table C.1.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Nebraska Language Arts Standards have significant issues related to specificity. Many indicators were found to duplicate across numerous grades. Duplication of content across grades leaves educators to wonder when a particular knowledge or skill should be mastered and assessed. Some indicators are so broadly described they do not provide clear guidance to teachers, students, and parents about the knowledge and skills that are required of students at each grade level. To avoid problems created by duplication and/or broadly described content, indicators should appear only in the grade in which the knowledge or skill is mastered, be used as content organizers, or be revised to provide more guidance to educators about the knowledge or skill that is expected of students at each grade level.

Rating for Specificity: 1
Significant and extensive revisions of the standard are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section.

VI. THE CRITERION OF MEASURABILITY

Measurability addresses the question of whether the *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* identify knowledge and skills that can be assessed. Generally stated goals of the curriculum may help to introduce or frame standards, but ultimately teachers must have a clear sense of what is expected of students, and students should be capable of demonstrating this knowledge and skill.

In cases where the content of the standards is not measurable, it may be due to unclear language. In other cases, it might be that the text mixes standards with useful instructional strategies or generally held goals of the curriculum. Such supporting information has value for teachers, but it does not directly serve the purpose of clearly stating the knowledge and skills expected of students. Instructional support is frequently not found in state standards, but rather in supplementary documents, commonly called curriculum frameworks.

VARIED INTERPRETATION

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* contained a few indicators that are difficult to measure because an aspect of the indicator may be variously interpreted by educators, or an aspect of the indicator cannot be monitored or objectively measured. Several indicators use the verb "explore" to indicate the level of skill required of students. However, this word may be open to interpretation. Consider the following example:

> *LA 1–2.1.6.d: Explore the ways authors use words (e.g., rhythm, repeating line, simile, alliteration, onomatopoeia)*

There may be little to no consensus on what "exploring" might entail in the context of the indicators shown above. It would be difficult to objectively measure how effectively students have explored a concept or skill, given the variability implied in the process of exploration. Similarly varied interpretation may impact the consistency of assessment in relation to the indicators shown below:

> *LA 0.1.4.c: Notice that spaces define word boundaries*
>
> *LA 1.1.4.c: Notice and use spaces and punctuation to define word and text boundaries*
>
> *LA 7.1.4.b: Notice when writers use words with different connotations and reflect understanding through voice*
>
> *LA 0.1.6.g: Build a basic knowledge of familiar genres for both narrative and informational text (e.g., fairy tales, nursery rhymes, picture books, how-to-books)*
>
> *LA 1–2.4.1.f & LA 3.4.1.g: Experience social networks and information tools to gather and share information (e.g., social bookmarking, online collaborative tools)*

Educators may not be consistent in how they interpret the words that are underlined in the above statements. Such indicators could be revised to eliminate or clarify the underlined portion of the knowledge or skill.

Several other indicators were found to exhibit potential problems in interpretation. In some indicators the verb "develop" is used, which suggests that the knowledge or skill may not need to be mastered. In a couple of cases, this impression is strengthened by the use of a different verb for the same skill in the following grade. Please note the following examples:

> *Kindergarten- LA 0.3.3.b: Develop conversation strategies (e.g., face the speaker, listen while others are talking, take turns talking, eye contact)*

Grade 1- LA 1.3.3.b: Use conversation strategies (e.g., face the speaker, listen while others are talking, take turns talking, eye contact)

Kindergarten- LA 0.3.3.c: Develop ability to participate in learning situations (e.g., small groups, show and share, cooperative problem solving, play)

Grade 1- LA 1.3.3.c: Participate in learning situations (e.g. small groups, show and share, cooperative problem solving, play)

In the cases above, the only difference between the skill described in kindergarten and that in grade 1 is the verb "develop" versus "use" and "participate." The use of "develop" in this context implies that students will not master these skills in kindergarten. If that is the case, it is inappropriate for students to be assessed on content that has not yet been mastered. It is significant that many indicators in the Nebraska standards use the verb "develop," but in all other cases this verb is not used to differentiate the skill in more than one grade. However, in all cases the level of performance intended by the verb "develop" may be open to different interpretations. It does not clearly define the level of knowledge and skills required of Nebraska students. Indicators that use the verb "develop" would be made clearer and assessment of the skill more consistent if this verb were replaced with one that more clearly defines what is expected of students. For example, indicator *LA 0.1.5.d Develop an awareness of semantic relationships between known words and new words (e.g., concept words [color names, days of the week], labels)* could be revised to read, *"Recognize semantic relationships between known words and new words (e.g., concept words [color names, days of the week], labels)"* in order to clarify exactly what students should know and be able to do.

Other indicators also don't require mastery of a knowledge or skill. Note the following indicators:

LA 0.1.3.b: Begin to read, write, and spell some sight words

LA 1.1.4.a: Begin to read in meaningful phrases that sound like natural language to support comprehension

LA 1.1.4.a: Begin to read in meaningful phrases that sound like natural language to support comprehension

Standards should describe the knowledge and skills on which students will be assessed. The indicators shown above should be reworded to eliminate the underlined phrases and, if necessary, moved to a higher grade in which the skill should be mastered.

Finally, the intended level of assessment for many indicators is obscured by the word "independently," as it appears in three indicators:

LA 12.1.4.a: Independently incorporate elements of prosodic reading to interpret text in a variety of situations

LA 12.1.5.c: Independently apply appropriate strategy to determine meanings of unknown words in a variety of texts

LA 1.1.4.f: Read along with others and independently practice keeping an appropriate pace for a text

The appearance of 'independently" in these indicators implies that students may require assistance when this same skill appears in other grades without the word "independently." All indicators should be written at the level of proficiency, and thus the word "independently" should not be necessary.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Nebraska standards contain one instance where an indicator may present a problem for assessment because it describes a learning opportunity over which the student has little to no control. Note the following indicator:

LA 2.4.1.b: <u>Discuss</u> ethical and legal use of information

The intended knowledge or skill of this indicator is not a discussion skill; it is knowledge about plagiarism. The underlying knowledge on which students should be assessed could be made clear by removing the aspect of the indicator that depends on instruction. For example, students could be required to, "Describe ethical and legal uses of information." Removing the element of this indicator that prescribes how the knowledge should be learned will place the focus on the intended student outcome and clarify assessment.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The *Nebraska Language Arts Standards* have a few issues related to measurability. Numerous indicators were identified that pose problems for assessment because they may be open to interpretation. One indicator included an instructional strategy. Indicators found to have issues related to measurability may be revised to use more explicit, concrete verbs that indicate the level of mastery required of students.

Rating for Measurability: 2
One or more revisions of the standard are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

APPENDIX A: BREADTH

TABLE A.1. CONTENT NOT PRESENT IN NE STANDARDS BUT PRESENT IN THREE OR MORE OF FIVE COMPARISON DOCUMENTS

Content	Comparison Documents
Reading	
Arrange words in alphabetical order.	CA, IN, LA, WV
Distinguish between fact and fiction in informational texts.	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Read and analyze World Literature.	CA, IN, WV
Read and analyze American Literature.	CA, IN, GA, WV
Read and analyze British Literature.	GA, IN, WV
Distinguish fantasy from reality.	CA, IN, LA
Examine the social, historical, and cultural influences on literary texts and characters.	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Evaluate the meaning of archetypal patterns and symbols.	CA, GA, IN
Evaluate and trace the author's argument in informational texts.	CA, GA, IN, WV
Identify and describe dramatic elements (e.g., soliloquies, asides, rising action, exposition, climax, dénouement, dialogue, dramatic irony, monologue, character foils).	CA, GA, IN
Interpret and evaluate the impact of ambiguities, subtleties, contradictions, and incongruities in a text.	CA, GA, IN
Analyze critical responses to literature.	CA, GA, IN
Identify and interpret poetic devices (e.g., repetition, rhyme, patterns, structure).	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Writing	
Use basic early writing skills (e.g., write by moving from left to right and top to bottom; use scribbles, shapes, and drawings to represent words).	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Develop major and minor characters through dialogue.	CA, GA, IN, LA
Write narratives that establish plot, setting, and point of view.	CA, GA, IN
Produce technical writing.	CA, GA, IN
Use a range of narrative strategies (e.g., tension, suspense, flashback, foreshadowing).	CA, GA, IN , LA, WV
Incorporate source material and information into written reports.	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Address reader concerns and counter-arguments.	CA, GA, IN
Use strategies to plan and complete the research process (e.g., frame questions, gather information, brainstorm).	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Speaking / Listening	
Recite poems, stories, selections, rhymes, and songs.	CA, GA, IN, LA, WV
Use notes or memory aids to structure and assist in presentation delivery.	CA, GA, IN
Multiple Literacies	
Compare the ways in which different media cover the same event.	CA, GA, IN
Identify the techniques (e.g., sound, text, image) and strategies (e.g., inform, persuade, entertain) used in the media to achieve a desired effect.	CA, GA, IN
Evaluate the role of the media in forming public opinions.	CA, GA, IN

Content	Comparison Documents
Interpret and evaluate the various ways visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, illustrators, filmmakers, photographers) communicate information.	CA, GA, IN
Analyze the impact of the media on the democratic process.	CA, GA, IN
Design and publish documents by using advanced publishing software.	CA, GA, IN, LA
Use and integrate databases, spreadsheets, and graphics.	CA, GA, IN

Table A.2. Content present in NE Standards but Found in Two or Fewer of Five Comparison Documents

Curricular Indicator	Students:
LA 0–1.4.1.b	Develop understanding of authorship of print and online resources
LA 0–2.4.1.c	Develop awareness of safe behaviors when communicating and interacting with others (e.g., safe information to share online)
LA 0.4.1.d	Engage in activities with learners from a variety of cultures through electronic means (e.g., podcasts, video chats, distance learning)
LA 1–12.4.1.d	Engage in activities with learners from a variety of cultures through electronic means (e.g., podcasts, video chats, distance learning, e-pals)
LA 0–12.3.3.a	Develop awareness and sensitivity to the use of words (e.g., helpful and hurtful words, multiple meanings of words)
LA 0–1.1.1.a	Recognize that print varies (e.g., font, size, bold, italic. . .)
LA 0.1.1.c	Demonstrate voice to print match (e.g., student points to words as someone reads)
LA 1.1.1.c	Recognize voice to print match
LA 1.3.1.b	Communicate effectively in daily classroom activities and routines
LA 1–2.4.1.f LA 3–8.4.1.g	Experience social networks and information tools to gather and share information (e.g., social bookmarking, online collaborative tools)
LA 12.4.1.g	Use social networks and information tools to gather and share information (e.g., social bookmarking, online collaborative tools, web page/blog)
LA 1–2.2.f	Learn about writing by studying own and others' writing
LA 3–8.2.2.f	Analyze models and examples (own and others) of various genres to create a similar piece
LA 12.2.2.d	Analyze models and examples (own and others) of various genres to create a similar piece
LA 3.4.1.c	Practice safe and ethical behaviors when communicating and interacting with others (e.g., safe information to share online, appropriate language use, utilizing appropriate sites and materials)
LA 4–12.4.1.c	Practice safe and ethical behaviors when communicating and interacting with others (e.g., safe information to share online, appropriate language use, utilizing appropriate sites and materials, respecting diverse perspectives)
LA 8.3.3.d	Respect diverse perspectives while collaborating and participating as a member of the community
LA 12.3.3.d	Solicit and respect diverse perspectives while searching for information, collaborating, and participating as a member of the community
LA 12.1.3.b	. . . interpret meaning of symbols . . .

APPENDIX B: DEPTH

TABLE B.1. MARZANO'S TAXONOMY

Level 1: Retrieval		Sample Terms/Phrases
Recognizing	The standard requires the student to identify features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components.	• Recognize • Select • Match
Recalling	The standard requires the student to provide features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components.	• Identify • Label • List • Describe • Explain
Executing	The standard requires the student to perform a procedure without significant error, but does not necessarily require that the student understand how and why the procedure works.	• Describe different types of • Give examples of • Provide examples of

Level 2: Comprehension		Sample Terms/Phrases
Integrating	The standard requires the student to identify the basic structure of knowledge and the critical as opposed to non-critical characteristics of that structure.	• Describe/Explain why/how • Describe/Explain relationship between • Summarize
Symbolizing	The standard requires the student to identify or recognize features of information, but does not necessarily require the student to understand the structure of knowledge or require that the student be able to differentiate critical from non-critical components.	• Represent • Diagram • Illustrate • Model

Level 3: Analysis | Sample Terms/Phrases

Matching	The standard requires the student to identify important similarities and differences between knowledge.	• Compare • Distinguish • Categorize • Differentiate
Classifying	The standard requires the student to identify superordinate and subordinate categories related to knowledge.	• Classify and explain why • Generate categories
Analyzing Errors	The standard requires the student to identify errors in the presentation or use of knowledge.	• Assess • Diagnose • Evaluate
Generalizing	The standard requires the student to construct new generalizations or principles based on knowledge.	• Create a rule • Generalize • Determine
Specifying	The standard requires the student to identify specific applications or logical consequences of knowledge.	• Predict

Level 4: Knowledge Utilization | Sample Terms/Phrases

Decision Making	The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to make decisions or expects the student to be able to make decisions about the use of the knowledge.	• Decide • Select • Judge
Problem Solving	The standard expects the student to use the knowledge to solve problems or to solve problems about the knowledge.	• Adapt • Apply • Plan
Experimenting	The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to generate and test hypotheses or to generate and test hypotheses about the knowledge.	• Generate hypothesis • Test hypothesis
Investigating	The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to conduct investigations or to conduct investigations about the knowledge.	• Investigate • Research

Level 5: Metacognition		Sample Terms/Phrases
Specifying Goals	The standard requires the student to set a plan for goals relative to the knowledge.	• Set/define goals • Develop/ monitor goals • Varies approach based on purpose • Proposes/ forms a plan
Process Monitoring	The standard requires students to monitor the execution of the knowledge.	• Evaluate/ assess process • Reflect on process • Explain a procedure • Adjust for different purposes • Monitor process • Manage time/ resources • Revise process
Monitoring Clarity	The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she has clarity about the knowledge.	• Monitor understanding • Clarify thinking
Monitoring Accuracy	The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she is accurate about the knowledge	• Evaluate own assumptions • Analyze own bias • Validate thinking • Revisit solutions

TABLE B.2. DEPTH ANALYSIS

Nebraska Indicators	Cognitive Demand	Relative Grade Placement of Content
Reading		

Blending/Segmenting

Kindergarten LA 0.1.2.c Blend and segment syllable sounds into spoken words	Execution is at the **Retrieval** level (1) of Marzano's Taxonomy.	Content is not found before grade 1 in four states (CA, GA, IN, WV) at the same taxonomic level.

Contractions

Grade 2 LA 2.1.3.e Use word structure to read text • Contractions...	Execution is at the **Retrieval** level (1) of Marzano's taxonomy.	Content is found at grade 1 in four states (CA, GA, IN, WV) and in grade 2 in one state (GA) at the same taxonomic level.

Author's Purpose

Grade 1 LA 1.1.6.a Identify author, illustrator, and author's purpose (e.g., explain, entertain, inform)	Identification is at the **Retrieval** level (1) of Marzano's Taxonomy.	Content first appears in grade 2 in four states (CA, GA, IN, WV) at the **Retrieval level (1)** and at the **Comprehension level (2)** of Marzano's taxonomy.

Author's Perspective

Grades 4–5 LA 4–5.1.6.a ... Recognize how author perspective (e.g., beliefs, assumptions, biases) influences text.	Recognition is at the **Retrieval** level (1) of Marzano's taxonomy.	Content first appears in one state beginning in grade 8 (CA), in one state in grade 9–12 (GA), and in one state beginning at grade 11 (IN) at the **Analysis level (3)**.

Point of View

Grades 6–8 LA 6–8.1.6.b Identify and analyze elements of narrative text (e.g., ... point of view)	Identification is at the **Retrieval** level (1) and analysis is at the Analysis level (3) of Marzano's taxonomy.	Content first appears in grade 1 in one state (LA), in grade 3 in one state (CA), and in grade 4 in another state (GA) all at the Retrieval level (1) of Marzano's taxonomy.

Theme

Grades 6–8 LA 6–8.1.6.c Summarize narrative text using understanding of ... theme	Summarizing is at the Comprehension level (2) of Marzano's Taxonomy.	Content first appears in grade 2 in one state (IN), in grade 3 in two states (CA, LA), and grade 4 in another state (GA) at the Retrieval level (1) and Comprehension level (2) of Marzano's taxonomy.

Nebraska Indicators	Cognitive Demand	Relative Grade Placement of Content

Writing

Tone and Voice

Grade 4	Executing a skill and demonstration	Content is found in grades 9–12 in one state
LA 4.2.2.d Write considering tone/voice and typical characteristics of a selected genre (e.g., memoir, biography, report, formal letter).	of knowledge are at the **Retrieval level (1)** of Marzano's taxonomy.	(GA), grade 10 in one state (IN), and grade 11 in two states (CA, WV) at the same taxonomic level.

Prewriting

Kindergarten	Executing a skill is at the **Retrieval level (1)** of Marzano's taxonomy.	Content first appears in grade 1 in two states (CA, LA) and in grade 2 in one state (IN). Content is at the **Retrieval level (1)** in two states (IN, LA) and in one state (CA) at the **Knowledge Utilization level (4)** of Marzano's taxonomy.
LA 0.2.1.b Use prewriting activities to generate ideas (e.g., brainstorming, discussions, drawing, literature, personal/classroom experiences).		

Multiple Literacies

Bias and Propaganda

Grades 3–4	Recognition and identification are at the Retrieval level (1) of Marzano's taxonomy.	Content first appears in grade 6 in two states (CA, GA), and in grade 7 in one state (LA). Three states (CA, GA, IN) describe content at the **Retrieval level (1)** and one state (LA) describes content at the **Knowledge Utilization level (4)** of Marzano's taxonomy.
LA 3–4.4.1.e Recognize bias and commercialism . . .	Evaluation of the message is at the **Knowledge Utilization level (4)** of Marzano's taxonomy.	

APPENDIX C: SPECIFICITY

TABLE C.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER GRADE SPECIFICITY

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
Reading	

Decoding

Kindergarten	**Kindergarten**
LA 0.1.3.a: Acquire knowledge of letter names and corresponding sounds	Recognize and name all uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet. [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
Grades 1 & 2	Match all consonant and short-vowel sounds to appropriate letters [CA, GA, IN, LA]
LA 1-2.1.3.a: Use knowledge of letter/sound correspondence to read . . .	**Grade 1**
Grades 3–5	Generate the sounds for all letters, including long and short vowels [GA, WV]
LA 3-5.1.3.a: Use advanced sound/spelling patterns (e.g., vowel variance, multi-syllabic words) to read . . .	Read one syllable words [CA, IN, LA, WV]
Grades 6–12	Use common word patterns to decode new words (e.g., r-controlled letter-sound associations [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV], vowel diagraphs [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV], inflectional endings [GA, IN], and consonant blends [GA, LA, WV])
LA 6-12.1.3.a: Understand and use advanced sound/spelling patterns (e.g., vowel variance, multi-syllabic words) to read . . .	**Grade 2**
	Read regular multi-syllable words [CA, GA, IN]
	Use common word patterns to decode new words (e.g., diphthongs [CA, GA, LA, WV], special vowel spellings [CA, GA])

Reference Materials

Grades K–1	**Kindergarten**
LA 0-1.1.5.e: Explore print and digital reference materials to determine word meanings	Use classroom resources (e.g., word walls, picture dictionaries, teachers, peers) to support a writing process [IN]
Grade 2	**Grades 2–3**
LA 2.1.5.e: Explore and use print and digital reference materials to determine word meanings	Use reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary) to determine word meanings [CA, GA, IN, LA]
Grades 3–12	**Grades 3–4**
LA 3–12.1.5.e: Determine meanings using print and digital reference materials	Use reference materials (e.g., dictionary, glossary, thesaurus) to determine word meanings [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Grades 4–5
	Use reference materials (e.g., electronic and print dictionaries, glossaries, and thesauruses) to determine pronunciations, meanings, alternate word choices, and parts of speech [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Grade 8
	Determine pronunciations, meanings, alternate word choices, parts of speech, or etymologies of words [GA]

Grades 9–12

Use general dictionaries, specialized dictionaries, thesauruses, or related references as needed to increase learning [GA]

Making Predictions

Grades K–12	Kindergarten
LA 0.1.6.k, LA 1–5.1.6.m, LA 6–8.1.6.n, & LA 12.1.6.m: Form, clarify, and/or confirm predictions before, during, and after reading	Make predictions about a text using prior knowledge, pictures, and titles [CA, GA, LA, IN]

Kindergarten

Make predictions about a text using prior knowledge, pictures, and titles [CA, GA, LA, IN]

Grade 1

Confirm predictions about what will happen next in a text by using meaning clues (e.g., pictures, title, cover, story sequence, key words) [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]

Grade 3

Make and modify predictions about a text [CA, IN]

Grade 4

Make and confirm predictions about a text using prior knowledge and text content (e.g., illustrations, titles, topic sentences, important words, foreshadowing clues) [CA, IN]

Grades 5–8

Use examples and details in a text to make inferences or logical predictions about the outcome of a story or situation [LA, WV]

Grade 7

Make complex or abstract predictions by synthesizing information gained from previewing text and graphic aids [WV]

Grades 8–12

Analyze or evaluate what is read or heard by continuing to use comprehension strategies such as those involving predictions [IN, LA]

Writing

Spelling

Kindergarten	Kindergarten
LA 0.1.3.c: Use phonetic knowledge to write (e.g., approximated spelling)	Use letters and phonetically spelled words to create meaning [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
LA 0.1.3.b: Begin to . . . spell some sight words	Grade 1
Grade 1	Spell grade-appropriate high-frequency words [IN, LA]
LA 1.1.3.c: Spell single syllable phonetically regular words	Spell three or four letter words, such as consonant-vowel-consonant words [CA, IN, LA]
Grades 1 & 2	Grade 2
LA 1–2.1.3.a: Use knowledge of letter/sound correspondence to . . . spell	Spell words with consonant-blend and r-controlled patterns

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
LA 1–2.1.3.b: . . . spell sight words	[CA, IN, LA]
Grades 1–12	Spell correctly words with short and long vowel patterns [CA, IN, LA]
LA 1.2.1.f & LA 2–12.2.1.e: Edit writing for format and conventions (e.g., spelling, . . .)	Spell frequently used irregularly spelled words [CA, IN, LA]
Grades 3–5	Use common rules of spelling [GA, LA]
LA 3-5.1.3.a: Use advanced sound/spelling patterns (e.g., vowel variance, multi-syllabic words) to . . . spell	**Grade 3**
	Spell commonly used homophones [CA, GA, IN]
Grade 5	Spell one-syllable words that have contractions, compounds, or orthographic patterns (e.g., qu, consonant doubling, changing the ending of a word from -y to -ies when forming the plural) [CA, IN, LA]
Use word structure and derivations to . . . spell (e.g., Anglo-Saxon common roots and affixes)	
Grades 6–8	**Grade 4–5**
Use word structure and derivations to . . . spell (e.g., Anglo-Saxon, Greek, and Latin roots, foreign words frequently used in English, bases, affixes)	Use syllable constructions, inflections, roots, and affixes to spell words [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 5–6
Grades 6–12	Spell high-frequency, frequently misspelled words correctly [CA, GA, IN,, LA, WV)
LA 6-12.1.3.a: Understand and use advanced sound/spelling patterns (e.g., vowel variance, multi-syllabic words) to . . . spell	**Grade 8–12**
	Use correct spelling conventions [CA, GA, IN]

Word Choice & Details

Kindergarten	**Grade 1**
LA 1.2.1.d: Revise writing by adding details	Use descriptive words when writing [CA, GA, IN, LA]
Grades 1–12	**Grades 1–2**
LA 1.2.1.d & LA 2–12.2.1.c: Revise writing (e.g., quality of ideas . . . word choice . . .)	Use sensory details [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Grade 2
	Revise writing to provide more descriptive detail [IN, LA]
	Grade 4
	Include sensory details and concrete language [CA, GA, IN]
	Grades 5–12
	Use diction appropriate to the identified audience, purpose, and formality of the context [IN, LA]
	Grade 7–9
	Use specific, relevant details and vivid, precise words [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Grades 7–12
	Edit writing to improve word choice, use more precise and concise language, and set the desired tone and mood [GA, LA, WV]
	Grades 9–12
	Select active verbs [CA, IN, WV]

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
Capitalization	

Grades 1–12	**Grade 1**
LA 1.2.1.f & LA 2–12.2.1.e: Edit writing for format and conventions (e.g., ... capitalization ...)	Understand and apply rules for capitalization at the beginning of a sentence and to common proper nouns and pronouns (e.g., personal names, days of the week, months of the year, the pronoun "I") [GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 2
	Capitalize proper nouns, greetings, days of the week, and titles of books or people, greetings and closing of a letter, and initials in names [IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 3
	Capitalize geographical names, holidays, historical periods, and special events [CA, IN]
	Grade 4
	Capitalize names of magazines, newspapers, works of art, musical compositions, organizations, and the first word in quotations when appropriate [CA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grades 5–12
	Apply standard rules of capitalization [CA, GA, IN, LA]

Punctuation	

Grades 1–12	**Kindergarten**
LA 1.2.1.f & LA 2–12.2.1.e: Edit writing for format and conventions (e.g., ... punctuation ...)	Use period at the end of sentences [LA, WV]
	Grade 1
	Use appropriate end punctuation (e.g., period, exclamation point, question mark) [GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grades 2–3
	Use commas in the greeting and closure of a letter, with dates, locations, and items in a series [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 3
	Use quotation marks around titles of poems, songs, and short stories [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Grade 4
	Use apostrophes in the possessive case of nouns and in contractions [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Use underlining, quotation marks, or italics to identify titles of documents [CA, IN]
	Use quotation marks around direct quotations [CA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 5
	Use colons to separate hours and minutes and to introduce a list [CA, IN]

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
	Grade 6
	Demonstrate appropriate comma usage (e.g., compound and complex sentences, appositives, words in direct address) [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Use colons in the salutation of a business letter [CA, IN, LA]
	Grade 7
	Demonstrate appropriate comma usage (e.g., compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, dependent clauses, introductory phrases) [GA, IN, LA]
	Grades 9–12
	Identify hyphens, ellipses, brackets, and semicolons and use them correctly [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Produce work that shows correct use of the conventions of punctuation [CA, GA, IN]

Grammar

Grades 1–12	**Grade 1**
LA 1.2.1.f & LA 2–12.2.1.e: Edit writing for format and conventions (e.g., . . . grammar)	Identify and use regular singular and plural forms of nouns [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
LA 2–3.1.5.a Use word structure elements, known words, and word patterns to determine meaning (e.g. . . . basic parts of speech . . .)	**Grades 2–4**
	Use possessive forms of pronouns correctly [CA, GA, IN, LA]
LA 4–6.1.5.a Use word structure elements, known words, and word patterns to determine meaning (e.g. . . . parts of speech . . .)	**Grade 3**
	Write in complete sentences with correct subject-verb agreement [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grades 3–4
	Use regular and irregular verb forms, including past, present, and future verb tenses [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 4–6
	Use appositives and prepositional phrases to connect ideas [CA, IN]
	Grades 9–12
	Use independent and dependent clauses to connect ideas [CA, GA, IN]
	Grade 6
	Use correct verbs for agreement with compound subjects [GA, IN, LA]
	Correctly use indefinite pronouns [CA, GA, IN]
	Identify and use prepositional phrases [GA, IN]
	Grade 7
	Make clear references between pronouns and antecedents [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Identify and use infinitives and participles [CA, IN, LA]

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
	Recognize the parts of speech (i.e., adjective, noun, verb, adverb, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, interjection) [CA, GA, IN]
	Grades 7–8
	Use correctly punctuated adjective and adverb clauses [GA, LA]
	Use properly placed modifiers in writing [CA, GA, IN]
	Demonstrate correct usage of comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs [GA, LA]
	Grades 9–12
	Use gerund, infinitive, and participial phrases correctly [CA, GA, IN]
	Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar and syntax [CA, GA, IN, LA]

Sentence Construction

Grades 1 & 2	Grade 1
LA 1.2.1.c & LA 2.2.1.b: Generate a draft by:	Write in complete sentences [CA, IN, LA, WV]
Composing sentences of varying length and complexity (e.g., diction, labeling, simple sentences)	Identify different types of sentences (e.g., declarative, interrogative, exclamatory) [LA, WV]
Grades 1–12	**Grades 2–3**
LA 1.2.1.d & La 2–12.2.1.c: Revise writing (e.g., . . . sentence fluency . . .)	Distinguish between complete and incomplete sentences [CA, GA, IN, LA]
Grades 3–12	Write different types of sentences (e.g., declarative, interrogative, exclamatory) [GA, WV]
LA 3–12.2.1.b: Generate a draft by:	**Grades 3–4**
Composing paragraphs with sentences of varying length and complexity	Identify and use grammatically correct sentences, avoiding run-on sentences and fragments [GA, IN, WV]
	Grade 4
	Use simple and compound sentences in writing and speaking [CA, GA, WV]
	Grades 4–5
	Identify and use a variety of sentence types (i.e., declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative) [LA, WV]
	Grade 6
	Identify and write simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, avoiding fragments and run-ons [GA]
	Grade 8
	Use subordination, coordination, apposition, and other devices to indicate clearly the relationship between ideas [CA, IN]
	Grades 9–12
	Apply standard rules of sentence formation, including parallel structure and subordination [IN, LA, WV]

Revise writing to strategically improve sentence variety and style [CA, GA, WV]

Organizing Ideas for Writing

Kindergarten

LA 0.2.1.c: . . .select and organize ideas relevant to a topic

Grade 1

LA 1.2.2.e: Write stories that have a beginning, middle, and end; present facts and details in a logical order

Grades 1–12

LA 1.2.1.c & LA 2–12.2.1.b: Generate a draft by:

Selecting and organizing ideas relevant to topic, purpose, and genre

Grades 2–3

LA 2–3.2.2.e: Use an organizational structure that will help readers understand information presented and keep reader's interest

Grade 4–5

LA 4–5.2.2.e: Select and use an organizational structure that will help readers understand information presented and keep reader's interest; arrange print on page purposefully

Grades 6–12

LA 6–8.2.2.e & LA 12.2.2.c: Write using well-crafted, cohesive organization appropriate to the task

Grade 1

Write a simple story in chorological order with a beginning, middle, and end [GA, IN, LA, WV]

Grade 1–2

Write compositions with a coherent beginning and end [GA, LA]

Write compositions with a central idea or focus [LA, IN]

Grade 3

Write paragraphs with topic sentences and simple supporting facts and details [CA, IN, WV]

Use basic transitional words and phrases [GA, LA, WV]

Grade 4

Write compositions that include introductory and concluding paragraphs [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]

Use a logical, sequential order [GA, IN, LA]

Grade 5

Pose a central question or state a controlling idea that conveys a perspective on a subject [CA, GA]

Provide details and transitional expressions that link one paragraph to another [CA, IN, LA, WV]

Grade 5–8

Use organizational structures for conveying information (e.g., chronological order, cause and effect, compare and contrast, order of importance, similarity and difference, posing and answering a question, climactic order) [CA, GA, IN, LA]

Grade 6

Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition [CA, GA, IN]

Follow an organizational pattern appropriate to the type of composition [CA, GA]

Grade 7

Create an organizational structure that balances all aspects of the composition [CA, IN]

Use effective transitional words and cues to unify important ideas [CA, IN, LA, WV]

Grade 8

Identify and use parallelism (use consistent elements of grammar

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
	when compiling a list) in all writing to present items in a series and items juxtaposed for emphasis [CA, IN]
	Define and state a thesis [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Grades 9-12
	Structure ideas and arguments in an effective and sustained way, following an organizational pattern appropriate to the purpose and intended audience [CA, GA, LA]
	Develop organized, coherent paragraphs with topic sentences that follow a logical, persuasive sequence [GA, LA, WV]
	Construct clearly worded and effectively placed thesis statements that convey a clear perspective on the subject [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]

Handwriting and Formatting

Grades 1–2	**Grade K**
LA 1.2.1.g & LA 2.2.1.f: Publish a legible document (handwritten)	Print all uppercase and lowercase letters, attending to the form of the letters [CA, IN, LA, WV]
Grades 3–12	**Grade 1**
LA 3–12.2.1.f: Publish a legible document (e.g., handwritten or electronic)	Write with appropriate spaces between letters, words, and sentences [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Grade 2
	Print legibly (e.g., letter formation, letter size, spacing, alignment) [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Grade 3
	Write legibly in cursive [CA, GA, IN, LA, WV]
	Grade 4
	Indent the beginning of paragraphs [CA, GA, IN LA, WV]
	Grade 8
	Use formatting techniques (e.g., headings, differing fonts, page orientation) to aid comprehension [CA, IN]
	Grades 9–12
	Follow style conventions and manuscript requirements for specific types of documents [CA, GA, WV]
	Use page formats, fonts, spacing, highlighting, and images that contribute to the readability and impact of the document [CA, GA]

Speaking and Listening

Presentation Skills and Techniques

Grades 1–3	**Grades 1–2**
LA 1–3.3.1.a Communicate ideas and information in a clear and concise manner (e.g., language, word choice, sequence, relevance)	Speak clearly at a speed and volume appropriate for purpose and setting [CA, IN, LA]
Grades 2–5	**Grade 2**
LA 2–5.3.1.b Demonstrate speaking techniques for a variety of purposes and situations	Organize presentations to maintain a clear focus [CA, IN]
	Grades 3–5
Grades 4–5	Use clear diction and phrasing [IN, LA]
LA 4–5.3.1.a Communicate ideas and information in a clear and concise manner	Adjust speaking tone, volume, and pacing to suit purpose, audience, and setting [LA, IN]
	Use appropriate eye contact [CA, IN, LA]
Grades 6–12	**Grades 4–5**
LA 6–12.3.1.a Communicate ideas and information in a clear and concise manner appropriate to its purpose	Engage the audience with appropriate facial expressions and gestures [CA, IN]
Grades 6–12	**Grades 4–12**
LA 6–12.3.1.b Demonstrate and adjust speaking techniques for a variety of purposes and situations	Organize oral presentations with traditional structures to support important ideas and viewpoints [CA, IN, LA]
	Grade 5
	Select a focus for an oral presentation [CA, IN]
	Grades 5–8
	Adjust enunciation to suit the purpose for speaking, engaging the audience with appropriate verbal cues [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Use appropriate grammar in oral presentations [IN, LA]
	Grade 6
	Relate verbal communication (e.g., word choice, pitch, feeling) to the nonverbal message (e.g., posture, gesture) [CA, IN, LA]
	Grade 7
	Organize information to achieve particular purposes and to appeal to the background and interests of the audience [CA, GA, IN]
	Grades 9–12
	Analyze the occasion and the interests of the audience and choose effective verbal and nonverbal techniques (e.g., voice, gestures, repetition) for presentations [CA, IN, LA]
	Use logical, ethical, and emotional appeals that enhance a specific tone and purpose [CA, GA]
	Use rhetorical devices to support assertions [CA, GA, IN, LA]
	Recognize and use elements of classical speech forms (e.g., introduction, first and second transitions, body, conclusion) in formulating rational arguments and applying the art of persuasion and debate [CA, IN]

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content

Use of Visual Aids and Media

Grades 3–12	**Grade 3**
LA 3–12.3.3.c Interact and collaborate with others in learning situations by contributing questions, information, opinions, and ideas using a variety of media and formats	Clarify and enhance oral presentations through the use of appropriate props (e.g., objects, pictures, charts) [CA, LA]
	Grade 6
Grades 4–12	Support opinions with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology [CA, GA, WV]
LA 4–12.3.1.c Utilize available media to enhance communication	**Grades 9–10**
	Use props, visual aids, graphs, and electronic media to enhance the appeal and accuracy of presentations [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Grades 11–12
	Deliver multimedia presentations that combine text, images, and sound and draw information from many sources (e.g., television broadcasts, videos, films, newspapers, magazines, CD-ROMs, the Internet, electronic media-generated images) [CA, GA, IN]

Following Directions

Grades K–3	**Kindergarten**
LA 0–3.3.2.b: Listen for information in order to complete a task	Understand and follow one- and two-step spoken directions [CA, GA, IN, LA]
Grades 4–12	**Grade 1–2**
LA 4–12.3.2.b: Listen to multi-step directions in order to complete a task	Demonstrate ability to read and follow two-step written directions [CA, IN, LA]
	Grade 2
	Follow three- and four-step oral directions [CA, GA, IN]
	Grade 3
	Follow simple multiple-step written instructions (e.g., how to assemble a product or play a board game) [CA, IN, LA]
	Grade 5–6
	Follow procedures from detailed oral instructions and directions (e.g., to create a simple product, prepare an application) [CA, IN, LA]
	Grade 7–8
	Understand and explain the use of a device by following technical directions [CA, GA]
	Grades 9–12
	Demonstrate use of complex technology by following technical directions [CA, IN]

Comprehension and Analysis of Oral Texts

Kindergarten

LA 0.3.2.c: Listen and retell main ideas of information heard

Grades 1–2

LA 1–2.3.2.c: Listen to and retell specific details of information heard

Grades 1–5

LA 1–5.3.2.d: Listen to and comprehend thoughts, ideas, and information being communicated

Grades 3–12

LA 3–12.3.2.c: Listen attentively, ask questions to clarify, and take notes to ensure accuracy of information

Grades 6–12

LA 6–12.3.2.d: Listen to, analyze, and evaluate thoughts, ideas, and information being communicated

Grade 1

Ask questions about information shared orally for clarification and understanding [CA, IN, LA]

Grade 2

Paraphrase information that has been shared orally by others [CA, IN, LA]

Determine the purpose or purposes of listening (e.g., to obtain information, to solve problems, for enjoyment) [CA, IN]

Grade 3

Connect and relate prior experiences, insights, and ideas to those of a speaker [CA, IN , WV]

Grade 3–5

Retell, summarize, and explain information presented orally, including the speaker's major ideas and supporting evidence [CA, IN, GA, LA, WV]

Grade 4

Ask relevant and thoughtful questions about oral information [CA, GA, IN, LA]

Grade 5

Interpret a speaker's verbal and nonverbal messages, purposes, and perspectives [CA, IN, WV]

Grade 6

Analyze the use of rhetorical devices (e.g., cadence, repetitive patterns, use of onomatopoeia) for intent and effect [CA, IN]

Identify the tone, mood, and emotion conveyed in the oral communication. [CA, GA, IN]

Grade 7

Respond to persuasive messages by expressing a point-of-view on the topic or with questions, challenges, or affirmations [CA, GA, WV]

Ask probing questions to elicit information, including evidence to support the speaker's claims and conclusions [CA, GA, IN]

Grade 8

Paraphrase a speaker's purpose and point of view [CA, GA, IN, LA]

Evaluate the credibility of a speaker (e.g., hidden agendas, slanted or biased material) [CA, LA]

Ask relevant questions concerning the speaker's content, delivery, and purpose [CA, GA, IN, LA]

Grades 9–12

Analyze historically significant speeches to find the rhetorical devices and features that make them memorable [CA, GA, IN]

Nebraska Indicators	Suggested Content
	Assess how language and delivery affect the mood and tone of the oral communication and make an impact on the audience [CA, IN]
	Analyze persuasive techniques and the types of arguments used by the speaker (e.g., argument by causation, analogy, authority, emotion, and logic) [CA, GA, IN, WV]
	Identify logical fallacies used in oral addresses (e.g., attack ad hominem, false causality, red herring, overgeneralization, bandwagon effect) [CA, GA]
	Analyze the four basic types of persuasive speech (i.e., propositions of fact, value, problem, or policy) and understand the similarities and differences in their patterns of organization and the use of persuasive language, reasoning, and proof [CA, GA, IN]
	Evaluate the clarity, quality, effectiveness, and general coherence of a speaker's important points, arguments, evidence, organization of ideas, delivery, diction, and syntax [CA, GA, IN]

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